

L A Y

DECLARATION

OF THE

WESLEYAN METHODISTS

IN MANCHESTER.

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MANCHESTER:  
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1834.

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## DECLARATION, &c.

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We the undersigned, Officers of the Wesleyan-Methodist Society, and others, connected with the four Manchester Circuits, feel ourselves called upon by recent events, occurring in this town and its vicinity, to give public expression to our opinions and feelings on the subjects now agitating the Connexion to which we belong.

Firstly,—We solemnly protest against the impression which certain persons, who can now only be regarded as seceders from the Society, in the first Manchester Circuit, and their coadjutors, are now attempting to create, that the measures which they are pursuing emanate from the united Methodists of Manchester.

On the contrary, we declare that we, and many others, view the late conduct of Dr. Warren with the strongest disapprobation, as inevitably tending to the confusion of all Church order and discipline, and to the consequent destruction of the rights, not only of the Preachers, but also of the people.

We deeply lament that so many of those, with whom we have been united in Christian fellowship, have concurred in the proceedings of their late Pastor. While we make every allowance in their favour, in consideration of their evident want of full and accurate information upon the matters in dispute,—of their once commendable attachment to the individual set over them in the Lord,—and of the irritation and excitement so common at a period like the present,—we cannot but express our conviction, that information sufficiently satisfactory might and ought to have been obtained,—that no attachment to any particular minister can justify the violence and contempt, with which other ministers have been wantonly treated;—and that no personal vexations and injuries, whether real or imaginary, can furnish a just ground for endeavouring to inflame and prejudice the minds of others against the exercise of christian discipline.

We regard the endeavour now made by a portion of the people to legislate in reference to the proceedings of the Conference as demonstrably unscriptural,—as subversive of the settled Constitution of the Body,—and as a measure the most absurd and inconsistent, when originated by those whose jealousy of the power of the Conference over them is so incessant and so sensitive.

We view with feelings of the greatest abhorrence all attempts to withhold from the different departments of the Work of God, as carried on by our community, that pecuniary support which is essential to their

maintenance, and the obligation of which we believe to be felt by every enlightened conscience. No sadder proof can be afforded us of the delusion under which many, as we fear, now labour, than the fact that, having voluntarily availed themselves of the peculiar and inestimable privileges of membership with the Wesleyan Methodist Society, and having virtually and repeatedly pledged themselves to promote the objects of that Society,—they are now denying the power which has protected them in all their Christian enjoyments,—employing what should be an apparatus of extensive blessing in an unnatural and destructive rebellion,—attempting to deprive many of those who are either now labouring, or have exhausted all power to labour, in their service, and the widows and children of men whose memory even they love and reverence, of the means of subsistence,—striving to withhold from thousands of their Brethren, both in the poorer Circuits at home, and in foreign lands, religious means and ordinances,—using every effort to crush the innocent Trustees of Methodist Chapels throughout the Kingdom,—and, in effect, thus vainly endeavouring to extinguish that light which Wesleyan Methodism has so long contributed to diffuse.

We declare our perfect confidence in the constitution, character, and conduct of the Wesleyan Conference, and our unalterable belief that, whatever decisions that Body has adopted, its members are men of sound and hearty piety, of unprejudiced judgment, and of unimpeachable Christian integrity,—men of fearless independence and incapable of the undue domination or influence of any person or party,—men as to whose proceedings any further proposals of lay inspection, or of individual secresy, are unnecessary, unjust, and calumnious.

We especially take this opportunity of recording our grateful opinion of the services rendered to Wesleyan Methodism, by the Reverend Jabez Bunting, and the Rev. Robert Newton. We “esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake.” We concur in the judgment so often and so decidedly expressed by the Ministers of our Community, as to the long-tried integrity and pre-eminent usefulness of these honoured brethren. And, believing them to be actuated by the purest motives, and to be eminently endued with “the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind,” we assert our entire disbelief of any aspersions upon their character, whether public or private.

And we beg finally, most affectionately and faithfully, to caution and admonish all over whom we have any influence against the conduct which we have felt bound to condemn. We refer them to their obligations to Wesleyan Methodism; we appeal to the practical working of our Constitution, in the salvation of myriads of persons, many of them their nearest and dearest connexions;—we remind them of the inherent power, which our economy has ever been found to possess, of adapting itself, by all improvements, proposed in a proper manner, and by proper persons, to the circumstances of the Church and of the world,—a power which has been continually in operation, since the decease of Mr. Wesley, up to the very last Conference, in the enlargement and confirmation of the legitimate rights of the people;—we point them to the fate of former schisms in our Body;—we beg them well to consider the character of the present divi-

sion;—and we urge them to contentedness, to peace, where peace is possible,—but, above all, to a resolute and steady avowal of their acknowledged Methodistical principles.

On our own part, we humbly, and, as we hope, in the fear and love of God, pledge ourselves to the most vigorous and united efforts for the maintenance of a system, which has been so eminently sanctioned by His blessing;—which, even now, is conferring so many advantages upon mankind, and which, if preserved in its original purity, promises its benefits to the latest posterity.

Manchester, Jan. 1st, 1835.

*N. B.—No general application has been made to Private Members.*

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Mr. JOHN HULL having asserted, in a pamphlet recently published by him, that many persons have signed the above declaration, in consequence of the improper influence, or of the misrepresentations of the individuals who procured the signatures, the following letter was sent to him, by the Secretary of the Lay Declaration Committee. No answer has been re-



ceived, although Mr. Hull has repeated his assertion, in a second edition of his publication.

*Manchester, December 9th, 1834.*

MR. JNO. HULL,

SIR,

As it is asserted or implied, in the pamphlet recently published by you, that many persons have signed the "Declaration of the Wesleyan Methodists in Manchester," in consequence of the improper influence, or of the misrepresentations of the individuals, who procured the signatures. I beg to inform you, that it has become necessary to print a New Edition of that Declaration, and that, therefore, an opportunity will be afforded, both to make some considerable addition to the number of the Declarationists, and to rectify any mistakes as to those names which were originally appended. If you will favour me with a list of those persons, whom you conceive to have been thus misled or unduly influenced, I will immediately see them, and if they request it, state in a note to the New Edition, their wish not to be considered as pledged to the sentiments of the Declaration. I shall delay going to press until Thursday morning, to give you time to investigate the matter, and to reply to this communication, and shall consider myself at liberty to publish, either this letter, or any answer with which you may oblige me, or both, as circumstances may suggest.

I am, Sir,

Yours very respectfully,

JNO. WESTHEAD,

Secretary to the Manchester Lay-Declaration Committee.

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